

WASHINGTON – America's NATO allies should shoulder a greater share of the financial burden of the Kosovo mission, said U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL) today.

Bachus and several other members want the Clinton administration to pursue reimbursements from other NATO countries to cover some of the United States's costs for the military action. In a letter being sent to House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bill Young (R-FL), they are asking to include such a provision in the emergency appropriations bill that pays for the NATO operation. The House is expected to take up the emergency bill, expected to cost at least \$6 billion, next week.

"The United States is supplying at least 75 percent of the forces involved in this mission. We are just one of 19 countries in NATO and it's only fair and right to expect our NATO allies to assume a greater share of the load. If they can't do that by supplying more forces, they can at least be responsible for paying a larger share of the costs of this operation," Bachus said.

The U.S. has provided the overwhelming majority of the NATO forces used in the Balkans so far. As of last week, the U.S. had deployed about 500 aircraft, an aircraft carrier in the Adriatic Sea, and over 21,000 troops to support the air campaign. An additional 300 U.S. warplanes are being deployed and within the next week, 50 U.S. Apache attack helicopters will arrive in Albania as well as 4,000 U.S. troops to support the helicopters. The U.S. is also dispatching the Multiple Rocket Launcher System to defend the helicopters, a second aircraft carrier -- the U.S.S. Enterprise -- and is calling up 33,000 U.S. Air Force reservists.

"Protecting our troops and giving them the tools they need to do their job always comes first and takes top priority, but American taxpayers should have at least some assurance that their interests are also kept in mind," Bachus said.